



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Georgia's Pre-K Program Welcomes 84,000 Four Year Olds This Fall**

*Program Recognized Nationally as Among the Best Based on  
Teacher Qualifications, Quality Standards, and Enrollment*

**Atlanta, Ga., (July 25, 2014)** – School bells will be ringing soon for up to 84,000 four year olds attending Georgia's Pre-K Program. The voluntary, lottery-funded Pre-K program has been recognized as one of the top programs in the nation, based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and enrollment. Georgia's Pre-K Program, considered universal – meaning that any age eligible child may attend the program regardless of family income, is beginning its 22<sup>nd</sup> year.

Georgia's model for providing the Pre-K program is unique in that it is offered through a public-private partnership in local school systems, in private child care centers, and in other facilities. The first day of Georgia's Pre-K year varies based on the school system and child care provider calendar. During the 2013-2014 school year, sixty-six percent of all four year olds in Georgia were served by state Pre-K and Head Start, with a statewide Pre-K enrollment of nearly 82,000.

"Pre-K is an exciting time as our state's youngest learners begin their formal educational journey," said Amy M. Jacobs, Interim Commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). "Recent independent studies have shown that Georgia's Pre-K helps four year olds build a solid foundation for lifelong learning, with significant impacts in school readiness skills in language, literacy, and math."

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“Starting school is a significant time for children and families,” said Susan Adams, assistant commissioner for Georgia’s Pre-K Program. “Many children enrolling in Pre-K are ‘leaving home’ for their first school experience. For this reason we take our roles very seriously, and we work really hard to to provide Georgia’s children with positive and meaningful experiences.”

Adams said this summer DECAL offered 20 Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Classes for 280 students who will enter Pre-K this fall, and 62 Rising Kindergarten Summer Transition classes for 992 students who will enter Kindergarten. The classes are designed to help prepare students for the challenges of Pre-K and Kindergarten, and make the experience more positive and productive.

For parents enrolling their children in Georgia’s Pre-K Program, Adams offers the following tips to help make the first day go smoother:

- Send your child to school in clothes they can manage independently in the bathroom: No overalls.
- Make sure your child’s shoes are comfortable for playtime. Slip on shoes or shoes with Velcro fasteners are easiest for children to manage.
- Visit the classroom before school starts so children are familiar with the new surroundings.
- Tell your child’s teacher about any fears he or she may have.
- Inform the teacher of any special dietary needs or allergies your child may have and ask the teacher to explain program policies around meals.
- Complete necessary forms or releases your Pre-K provider may require for dispensing medication during the school day.
- Locate the bathroom with your child and determine any special bathroom routines the school observes.
- Build in extra time for the first day: Make sure you have time to say good-bye.
- Determine if your child needs a blanket for rest time: Can they bring a favorite stuffed animal?
- Send along a family photo in your child’s backpack in case they get lonely.

### **About Bright from the Start**

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia’s Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.dec.al.ga.gov](http://www.dec.al.ga.gov).